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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: MOROCCO ACTS AGAINST PEACEKEEPERS ACCUSED OF
SEXUAL ABUSE

1.(U) Morocco announced February 12 that it had arrested six Moroccan troops who had been deployed as a part of MONUC peacekeeping forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a part of continuing investigations into allegations of sexual abuse. In a press release circulated by the Moroccan Embassy in Kinshasa, the Moroccan government also reported that it had dispatched a team of Army officers in June 2004 to begin to assemble information related to the allegations. Seventeen troops were reportedly convoked by the Moroccan investigative team related to two separate allegations, and the six arrests arose from those investigations.

2.(U) The Moroccan government also reported that the Commander and Deputy Commander of the 805-strong Moroccan MONUC contingent had been relieved of their duties. The Moroccan press release reaffirmed Morocco's continuing support of the UN's "zero tolerance" policy, and the Moroccan government's strong commitment to fundamental principles of the UN Charter, and specifically to ensure correct standards of behavior of all its troops.

3.(SBU) Separately UN SRSG Bill Swing told the Ambassador that, in initial meetings, the Pakistani General assigned to command the new Pakistani brigade now being formed in South Kivu affirmed in very strong terms his intention that the brigade would not provide new cases of misconduct. The General reportedly indicated that he was well aware of the allegations of sexual misconduct that have arisen from MONUC troop conduct and was determined that the Pakistani South Kivu brigade would set a very high standard of correct behavior.

4.(SBU) Comment: The Moroccan action is a welcome sign of commitment from a troop-contributing country to address the serious allegations of MONUC troop sexual misconduct. While hardly a definitive resolution of the problem, combined with prosecution of offenders in France and South Africa, it does help create movement toward effective action against offenders, and thus a substantially higher deterrence level against future misconduct. MONUC has very limited capacity for disciplinary action absent active cooperation from troop-contributing country governments, and at least these initial signs from several of the major players are encouraging signs that effective corrective action regarding this serious issue is being initiated. End comment.

5.(U) Bujumbura minimize considered.
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